

LESSON 4

COMBATANT COMMAND ORGANIZATION

Introduction

Purpose

The Goldwater-Nichols Defense Department Reorganization Act of 1986 significantly strengthened the role of the combatant command in the execution of national strategy and national military strategy. This lesson focuses on the organization and authority of combatant commands and command relationships within the command.

Relationship to Other Instruction

This lesson discusses in detail Joint Pub 0-2, relating to the *Unified Action Armed Forces* (UNAAF), which states

*The guidance in this publication is **authoritative**; as such, this doctrine will be followed except when, in the judgment of the commander, exceptional circumstances dictate otherwise.*

The remaining lessons of this course will build on this doctrinal statement. Lessons 8 and 9 will build on this statement by examining the Joint Task Force.

Study Time

This lesson, including the issues for consideration, will require about 3.5 hours of study.

Educational Objectives

Organizational Framework	Explain the organizational framework within which joint forces are employed. [JPME Area 1b]
Purpose, Roles, Functions, and Relationships	Explain the purpose, roles, and functions of, and the relationships among, the National Command Authority (NCA), the National Security Council (NSC), the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), the combatant commanders, the service chiefs, and the joint force commanders (JFCs). [JPME Area 1c]
Joint Multinational Operations	Comprehend how the U.S. military is organized to plan, execute, sustain, and train for joint and multinational operations. [JPME Area 1e]
Current Joint Doctrine	Comprehend current joint doctrine. [JPME Area 2a]
MAGTF Aviation Policy	Explain the policy governing the issue of MAGTF tactical aviation assets by the JFC during sustained operations ashore.
JPME Areas/ Objectives/Hours (accounting data)	1/b/.5 1/c/.5 1/e/1 2/a/.5

Command Relationships, Assignment and Transfer of Forces

Introduction of Joint Force Concepts and Terms

Combatant command (COCOM) is the *nontransferable command authority over assigned forces* vested only in the commanders in chief (CINCs) of unified commands and the commanders of specified combatant commands.

Assigned forces are those forces that are habitually associated with (or permanently or semipermanently stationed within) a CINC's area of responsibility (AOR) *or* functional responsibility.

Let's look at the general scope of COCOM authority and functions as well as at more specific areas of its responsibility.

Scope of COCOM Authority and Functions

In accordance with the National Command Authority (NCA), National Security Council (NSC), and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), and unless otherwise directed by the Secretary of Defense, COCOM serves as the U.S. military single point of contact, having authority over all elements of the command relative to

Other combatant commands

DoD elements

U.S. diplomatic missions

Other U.S. agencies

Agencies of countries in (any other) area of responsibility (if assigned)

Doctrine and Policy for Establishing Joint Commands

Joint Force Levels

Joint forces are established at **three levels**:

Unified commands
Subordinate unified commands
Joint task forces

Definition of Unified Command

Established by the President, through the Secretary of Defense, with the advice and assistance of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), a *unified* command is a command *with broad continuing missions under a single commander*.

A unified command is *composed of forces from two or more military departments*.

Definition of Subordinate Unified (Subunified) Commands

When authorized through the CJCS, commanders of unified commands may establish *subordinate* unified commands (called *subunified commands*) to conduct operations on a continuing basis in accordance with the criteria set forth for unified commands.

A subordinate unified command may be established either on a *geographical* basis or on a *functional* basis. Examples include service component commands and functional component commands.

Command Structures

Commanders of subordinate unified commands have functions and responsibilities similar to those of the commanders of unified commands.

Note: Unless authorized by the Secretary of Defense, the commander of a unified command will **not** act as the commander of a subordinate command.

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Doctrine and Policy for Establishing Joint Commands, Continued

Definition of Joint Task Force

A joint task force (JTF) is a joint force that is constituted and *designated* as a joint task force by the Secretary of Defense, by a combatant commander, by a subordinate unified command commander, or by an existing joint task force commander. Without such JTF designation, a naval task force consisting of Navy and Marine Corps forces does not by itself constitute a joint task force.

Like a subordinate unified command, a joint task force may be established for either a *geographical* area or on a *functional* basis when the mission has a specific limited objective and does not require overall centralized control of logistics.

Responsibilities of Joint Force Chain of Command

Commander Responsibilities

Although specific responsibilities of a unified command vary, every *superior* commander has the following general responsibilities:

Timely communication of clear-cut missions or tasks, together with the role of each subordinate in the superior's plan

Timely assignment of forces and other assets to immediate subordinates for accomplishing assigned tasks

Transfer to subordinates all available information that bears on the changing situation, including changes in plans, missions, and tasks; resources; and friendly, enemy, and environmental situations

Delegation of authority to subordinates commensurate with their responsibilities

Subordinate Responsibilities

In addition to other responsibilities that vary according to circumstances, all subordinate commanders have the following responsibilities:

Accomplishment of missions or tasks

Maintenance of open communication to the superior commander for

- Advice
 - Timely information
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Adjacent Commander Responsibilities

Adjacent commanders *who share a common superior or a common boundary* are responsible for providing the following:

Consideration of the impact of the task or mission

Timely information

Support

Coordination for the support

Service Component Commands

**Composition
of Service
Component
Commands**

Established by the NCA and DoD, a combatant command-level service component is a subordinate command that usually consists of the service component commander and *all* service forces. These include individuals, units, detachments, organizations, installations, and the support forces that have been assigned to a combatant command.

**Responsibilities
of Service
Component
Commanders**

Service component commanders are responsible to the joint force commander (JFC) for the following:

Making recommendations to the JFC on the proper employment of the forces of the service component

Accomplishing such operational missions as may be assigned

Selecting and nominating specific units of the parent service component for assignment to other subordinate forces

Conducting joint training, including the training, as directed, of components of other services in joint operations for which the service component commander has, or may be assigned, primary responsibility, or for which the service component's facilities and capabilities are suitable

Informing their JFC (and their combatant commanders, if affected) of planning for changes in logistic support

Developing program and budget requests that comply with combatant commander guidance on warfighting requirements and priorities

Providing, as requested, supporting joint operation and exercise plans

Functional Component Commands

Sources of Authority

Combatant commanders, as well as commanders of subordinate unified commands and JTFs, have the authority to establish functional component commands to control military operations. Functional component commands may be established across the range of military operations to perform operational missions of short or extended duration.

Remember that without being *designated*, these functional commands are only component commands of a joint force and do *not* constitute a "joint force" (with the authority and responsibilities of a joint force) even when composed of forces from two or more military departments.

Authorization of Functional Component Commands and Command Relationships

The JFC establishing a functional component command has the authority to *designate* the

Military capability to be made available for tasking (by the functional component commander)

Appropriate command relationship(s)

Normally, the service component commander with the preponderance of forces to be tasked will be designated to be the functional component commander. However, when selecting a commander, the JFC will always consider the operation's mission, nature, duration, the force capabilities, and the command and control capabilities.

Note: The establishment of a functional component commander must not affect the command relationships between service component commanders and the JFC.

Recommendation Responsibility

The functional component commander is responsible for making *recommendations* to the establishing commander on the proper employment of the military capability made available to accomplish the assigned responsibilities.

Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) Doctrine

Scope of JFC and Geographic Combatant Authority

Nothing will infringe on the authority of the joint force commander or geographic combatant in

Exercise of operational control

Assignment of missions

Redirection, reappointment, and/or relocation of any Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) tactical air (TACAIR) sorties when the JFC has determined that they are required for higher priority missions

MAGTF Direct Support

Through either the *joint force air component commander*, or the joint force as a whole, the MAGTF commander will make sorties (that are in excess of the MAGTF direct support requirement) available to the JFC for the following taskings in support of other components of the joint force:

- Air defense
 - Long-range interdiction
 - Long-range reconnaissance
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MAGTF Control and Mission

The MAGTF commander will retain operational control of organic air assets.

The primary mission of the MAGTF air combat element is the support of the MAGTF ground element.

During joint operations, the MAGTF air assets will normally be in support of the MAGTF mission.

Required Reading

Joint Pub Readings

Joint Pub 0-2, *Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF)* (1995). Read pp. x to xvi (Executive Summary), and chapters III and IV. Find this reading in the *Joint Pub Readings* Vol. I (8800), pp. 147 to 153 and pp. 183 to 213. Chapter III presents an overview of the command relationships, assignment, and transfer of forces at the operational level of war. It also examines the command authority of the combatant commander. Chapter IV examines the doctrine and policy for establishing joint commands.

Issues for Consideration

**Assignment
and Transfer
of Forces**

Trace how forces are assigned and transferred from the NCA-level, the NSC-level, and the CJCS-level to the combatant commands.

**Establishment
and
Authorization
of Joint Forces**

How are the joint forces established, trained, and authorized for a combatant commander?

**Administrative
Control**

How does administrative control differ between authorities of a combatant commander?

Authority

What are the differences in command authority inherent in the terms COCOM, OPCON, and TACON?

**Options When
Organizing
Forces**

In terms of roles and functions, what options does a joint force commander have when organizing his forces?

**Service
Component
Command**

What does a combatant command-level service component consist of?

MAGTF Ops

What policies govern the use of MAGTF tactical aviation operations?
